

CLAIMS

1. (Canceled)

2. (Currently amended) ~~The communication method according to claim 1~~ A communication method implemented in a communication network for allowing members of an affinity group to send status information to and receive status information from other members of said affinity group, said communication method comprising:

forming an affinity group containing two or more members;

storing, in each individual members' communication device, status information concerning each other member of said affinity group;

when the status of any member in said affinity group changes, sending a status update message from said member whose status has changed to said each other member of said affinity group;

receiving said status update messages concerning each other member of said affinity group at said each other member's communication device; and
updating said status information in said each other member's communication device when a status update message concerning said any member is received;

wherein said status information comprises a plurality of status items.

3. (Original) The communication method according to claim 2 wherein the status information includes at least one or more of the following status items: on/off status of the member; activity status of the member; and location of the member.

4. (Previously presented) The communication method according to claim 2 wherein each individual member selects the status items from a list of available status items that are reported to each other member of the affinity group.
5. (Original) The communication method according to claim 2 further including the step of designating a period during which status updates are enabled.
6. (Original) The communication method according to claim 2 further including the step of designating a period during which status updates are suppressed.
7. (Canceled)
8. (Currently amended) ~~The communication method according to claim 7~~ A communication method implemented in a communication network for allowing members of an affinity group to send status information to and receive status information from other members of said affinity group, said communication method comprising:
 - forming an affinity group containing two or more members;
 - storing, in each individual members' communication device, status information concerning each other member of said affinity group;
 - when the status of any member in said affinity group changes, sending a status update message from said member whose status has changed to said each other member of said affinity group;
 - receiving said status update messages concerning each other member of said affinity group at said each other member's communication device; and

updating said status information in said each other member's communication device when a status update message concerning said any member is received;

automatically detecting status changes of a member and sending status update messages to said each other member of said affinity group when a status change is detected;

wherein the status of a member is monitored by said member's communication device and wherein said communication device is programmed to automatically transmit a status update message to said each other member of said affinity group when a change in status is detected.

9. (Canceled)

10. (Previously presented) A communication method implemented in a mobile communication network for allowing members of an affinity group to send status information to and receive status information from other members of said affinity group, said communication method comprising:

- a. forming an affinity group containing two or more members;
- b. storing member status information data in each mobile communication device used by said members;
- c. sending a first status update message from a first member's communication device to a centralized server when said first member's status changes;
- d. forwarding said first status update message from said server to each other member of said affinity group, including a second member of said affinity group;

- e. receiving said status update message at said second member's mobile communication device and updating said status information in said second member's mobile communication device when said status update message is received;
- f. sending a second status update message from said second member's communication device to said centralized server when said second member's status changes;
- g. forwarding said second status update message from said server to each other member of said affinity group, including said first member of said affinity group;
- h. receiving said status update message at said first member's mobile communication device and updating said status information in said first member's mobile communication device when said second status update message is received.

11. (Original) The communication method according to claim 10 wherein said status information comprises a plurality of status items.

12. (Original) The communication method according to claim 11 wherein the status information includes at least one or more of the following status items: on/off status of the member; activity status of the member; and location of the member.

13. (Previously presented) The communication method according to claim 11 wherein each individual member selects the status items from a list of available status items that are reported to each other members of the affinity group.

14. (Original) The communication method according to claim 11 further including the step of designating a period during which status updates are enabled.
15. (Original) The communication method according to claim 11 further including the step of designating a period during which status updates are suppressed.
16. (Previously presented) The communication method according to claim 10 further including the step of automatically detecting status changes of a member and sending status update messages to said each other member of said affinity group when a status change is detected.
17. (Previously presented) The communication method according to claim 16 wherein the status of a member is monitored by said member's communication device and wherein said communication device is programmed to automatically transmit a status update message to said affinity group when a change in status is detected.
18. (Original) The communication method according to claim 16 wherein the status of a member is monitored by a centralized server in said communication network and wherein status update messages are transmitted to other members in said affinity group when a member's status changes.
19. (Canceled)
20. (Currently amended) ~~The mobile communication device according to claim 19~~ A mobile communication device for allowing a member of an affinity group to send status information to and receive status information from other members of said affinity group, said mobile communication device comprising:

a memory for storing member status information data;
a transmitter for transmitting status update messages to other members of said
affinity group when said member's status changes;
a receiver for receiving status update messages from other members of said
affinity group;
a processor operatively connected to said memory for writing status information
to and reading status information from said memory, said processor being
programmed to:
generate a status update message when said member's status changes
for transmission by said transmitter to each other member of said
affinity group; and
update said status information stored in said memory when a status
update message is received from another member of said affinity
group;
wherein the member status information stored in said memory includes a plurality
of status items.

21. (Original) The mobile communication device according to claim 20 wherein the status items include one or more of the following status items: on/off status of the member; activity status of the member; and location of the member.

22. (Currently amended) ~~The mobile communication device according to claim 19 further including~~ A mobile communication device for allowing a member of an affinity group to send status information to and receive status information from other members of said affinity group, said mobile communication device comprising:

a memory for storing member status information data;
a transmitter for transmitting status update messages to other members of said
affinity group when said member's status changes;
a receiver for receiving status update messages from other members of said
affinity group;
a processor operatively connected to said memory for writing status information
to and reading status information from said memory, said processor being
programmed to:
generate a status update message when said member's status changes
for transmission by said transmitter to each other member of said
affinity group; and
update said status information stored in said memory when a status
update message is received from another member of said affinity
group;
means for selecting the status items from a list of available status items that are
reported to each other member of the affinity group.

23. (Currently amended) ~~The mobile communication device according to claim 19~~
~~further including~~ A mobile communication device for allowing a member of an affinity
group to send status information to and receive status information from other members
of said affinity group, said mobile communication device comprising:

a memory for storing member status information data;
a transmitter for transmitting status update messages to other members of said
affinity group when said member's status changes;

a receiver for receiving status update messages from other members of said affinity group;

a processor operatively connected to said memory for writing status information to and reading status information from said memory, said processor being programmed to:

generate a status update message when said member's status changes for transmission by said transmitter to each other member of said affinity group; and

update said status information stored in said memory when a status update message is received from another member of said affinity group;

means for designating a period during which status updates are enabled.

24. (Currently amended) ~~The mobile communication device according to claim 19 further including~~ A mobile communication device for allowing a member of an affinity group to send status information to and receive status information from other members of said affinity group, said mobile communication device comprising:

a memory for storing member status information data;

a transmitter for transmitting status update messages to other members of said affinity group when said member's status changes;

a receiver for receiving status update messages from other members of said affinity group;

a processor operatively connected to said memory for writing status information to and reading status information from said memory, said processor being programmed to:

generate a status update message when said member's status changes for transmission by said transmitter to each other member of said affinity group; and
update said status information stored in said memory when a status update message is received from another member of said affinity group;

means for designating a period during which status updates are suppressed.

25. (Canceled)